

Cite as:

Abels, Birgit. 2018. "It's Only the Water and the Rocks that Own the Land" Sound Knowledge and Environmental Change in Palau, Western Micronesia. *AEMR-EJ*, 2: 21-32.

Abstract

"IT'S ONLY THE WATER AND THE ROCKS THAT OWN THE LAND" SOUND KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN PALAU, WESTERN MICRONESIA

In this article, I take a closer look at the traditional performing arts in Palau as sound knowledge. In some ways, this project aligns with recent work across the humanities that seeks to address emotional responses to environmental degradation. I look at *chesols* as a type of knowledge that is substantive in nature and at the same time distinct to the qualities and affordance of its medium, i.e. sound. I will pursue this idea by, first, conceptually exploring the notion of sound knowledge as a resource for Pacific Island cultures and loosely situating it within recent debates in phenomenology, the theory of knowledge as well as music studies. Following this, I will return to The Giant, PLP's inflight video, looking at what can be gained from the idea that music offers a resource that may be key to survival in the complex environmental predicament of Palau, and by extension, Micronesia. What do Palauan musical practices know about sustainable ecologies and how do they know it? How does music-making make this knowledge operable and, consequentially, how do humans mobilize on this knowledge in coping with their changing life-world through music? Addressing these questions, I take a closer look at the musical genre employed in The Giant, *chesols*.

Keywords

Oceania, sound knowledge, *chesols*, ecological research

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